

Amendments to the claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in this application.

1. (currently amended): A process for manufacturing a 3-layer catalyst-coated polymer electrolyte membrane with catalyst layers on the front side and on the back side of the membrane, the process comprising coating the polymer electrolyte member coated by use of catalyst-containing inks, wherein the polymer electrolyte membrane is connected with at least one supporting foil during at least all coating steps and wherein the at least one supporting foil is perforated, and wherein the at least one supporting foil is capable of being removed prior to final assembly of any membrane-electrode-assembly (MEA) or fuel cell stack incorporating the membrane.

2. (currently amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein the process is conducted continuously and the polymer electrolyte membrane as well as the at least one supporting foil are provided in tape form.

3. (currently amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein a second supporting foil is applied to the front side of the polymer electrolyte membrane after a [[the]] first coating step of the front side, a [[the]] first supporting foil is removed from the back side of the polymer electrolyte membrane and subsequently [[the]] coating of the back side of the polymer electrolyte membrane is conducted.

4. (original): The process according to claim 1, wherein at least one supporting foil is fixed to the edge area of the catalyst-coated polymer electrolyte membrane by a lamination process.

5. (previously presented): The process according to claim 1, wherein the at least one supporting foil is perforated in a perforation pattern comprising 5 to 20 holes per square centimeter (cm^2) foil, whereby the holes have a diameter in the range of about 0.2 mm to 3 mm.

6. (previously presented): The process according to claim 1, wherein the polymer electrolyte membrane comprises of polymeric, perfluorinated sulphonic acid compositions, doped polybenzimidazoles, polyetherketones and polysulphones or other proton-conducting materials.

7. (original): The process according to claim 1, wherein the polymer electrolyte membrane has a thickness in the range of 10 to 200 μm .

8. (original): The process according to claim 1, wherein the at least one supporting foil comprises of polyester, polyethylene, polypropylene, polycarbonate, polytetrafluoroethylene, polyurethane, polyamide, polyimide, paper or other comparable materials.

9. (previously presented): The process according to claim 1, wherein the at least one supporting foil has a thickness in the range of 10 to 250 μm .

10. (original): The process according to claim 1, wherein screen printing, stencil printing, offset printing, transfer printing, doctor-blading or spraying is used as coating method.

11. (withdrawn - original): The process according to claim 1, comprising the steps
(a) coating the front side of a supported polymer electrolyte membrane having a first supporting foil on its back side with a catalyst layer and drying,
(b) applying a second supporting foil to the front side of the polymer electrolyte membrane,

- (c) removing the first supporting foil from the backside of the polymer electrolyte membrane,
- (d) coating the back side of the polymer electrolyte membrane with a catalyst layer and drying.

12. (withdrawn - original): The process according to claim 11, further comprising applying a first supporting foil to the back side of an unsupported polymer electrolyte membrane.

13. (withdrawn - previously presented): The process according to claim 11, further comprising removing the second supporting foil after the coating of the back side of the polymer electrolyte membrane.

14. (withdrawn - original): The process according to claim 11, further comprising applying an adhesive component between supporting foil and polymer electrolyte membrane.

15. (withdrawn - original): The process according to claim 11, further comprising post-treating the coated polymer electrolyte membrane in water at temperatures in the range of 20 to 95°C.

16. (withdrawn - original): The process according to claim 11, wherein the drying of the catalyst layer is performed by means of hot air, infrared, microwave, plasma or combinations thereof.

17. (withdrawn - original): The process according to claim 11, wherein the drying temperature is in the range of 20 to 150°C and the drying period is in the range of 1 to 30 minutes.

18. (previously presented): A 3-layer catalyst-coated polymer electrolyte membrane coated with a catalyst layer on the front side and the back side, manufactured according to the process of claim 1.

19. (previously presented): A membrane-electrode-assembly, for electrochemical devices such as PEM fuel cells, direct methanol fuel cells (DMFC), electrochemical sensors or electrolyzers, comprising the catalyst-coated polymer electrolyte membrane manufactured according to the process of claim 1.

20. (currently amended): Apparatus for manufacture of 3-layer catalyst-coated polymer electrolyte membranes in accordance with the process of claim 1 ~~any one of claims 1 to 17~~, comprising means for supporting the polymer electrolyte membrane with at least one supporting foil during all processing steps.